

H.606

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION ACT

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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, FISH, AND WILDLIFE
FEBRUARY 10, 2022





Safeguarding Biodiversity



ENERGIZE VERMONT

- Energize Vermont is a statewide, volunteer organization that promotes sensible energy and climate policy
- Additional Whitworth affiliations:
 - Newark Planning Commission
 - NVDA Board of Directors
 - Forest owner
 - Enrolled in Current Use
 - Recently completed a timber harvest



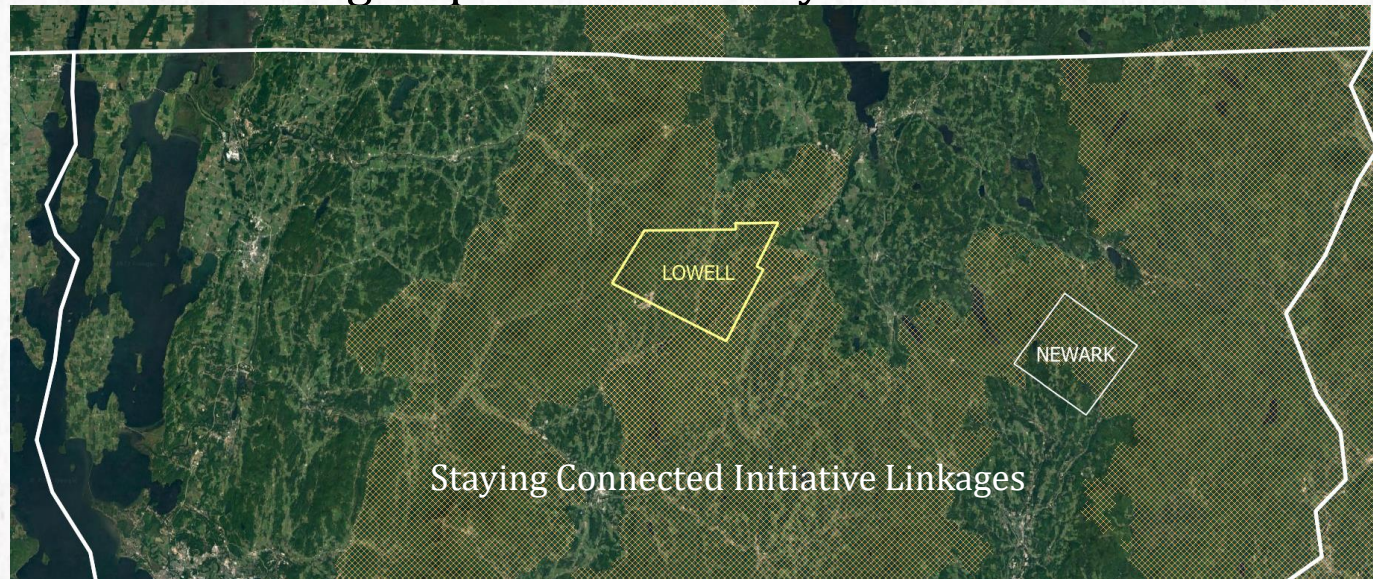
ENERGIZE VERMONT SUPPORTS H.606

- Energize Vermont enthusiastically supports H.606
- Why would Energize Vermont care about this bill?
- Because the biodiversity crisis is as severe as the climate crisis
- “Vermont’s most precious and effective mechanism for countering climate change is our forested landscape” and the resources described in the Vermont Conservation Design
- That goes for safeguarding biodiversity too
- So, we need to find a way to develop energy and reduce GHG emissions without degrading our forested landscape—and we need to do better...



CONTRIBUTING TO THE LOSS OF BIODIVERSITY

- Example 1: Kingdom Community Wind degraded an intact ecosystem in exchange for an annual GHG savings equal to a half-day's NYC traffic emissions



- This wind project is in Lowell, which occupies a central location in a wildlife linkage recognized by The Staying Connected Initiative



CONTRIBUTING TO THE LOSS OF BIODIVERSITY

Example 2: **Deerfield Wind destroyed Vermont's premier bear habitat for less than six hours' worth of NYC traffic emissions**– the PUC permitted the project in spite of the objections of ANR wildlife biologist Forrest Hammond:

[after modifications] the proposed project [Deerfield] construction and other associated human activities still represents a potentially **huge adverse impact to the black bears and their habitat at a level far above any that ANR has ever allowed to be permitted** in either the Section 248 or Act 250 regulatory processes. The area directly affected by the western array of turbines, access roads, and associated stormwater treatment currently contains dense concentrations of beech trees. The pattern of bear-scarring on these trees demonstrates that bears have historically used and relied on the mast from these trees. **The project seeks to clear these areas of necessary black bear habitat that are decisive to the survival of the species.**

Because of these impacts which the Petitioner has not mitigated **we [Fish and Wildlife] oppose the construction of the western segment (west of Route 8) of the revised project.**



Safeguarding Biodiversity



MAKE VERMONT A LEADER IN BIODIVERSITY

- We want to see ourselves as leaders in climate action
- We must make safeguarding biodiversity at least as important as emissions reduction
- Codify in statute a state policy goal to safeguard our biodiversity

Fully integrate biodiversity values into policies, regulations, planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies, accounts, and assessments of environmental impacts at all levels of government and across all sectors of the economy, ensuring that all activities and financial flows are aligned with biodiversity values. ([UN Post 2020 Biodiversity Framework](#))
- Develop indices of biodiversity and methods of biodiversity threat assessment that work in Vermont.
- Don't allow the Public Utility Commission to override ANR on matters of biodiversity



Safeguarding Biodiversity



EMPOWER PLANNERS

- Provide planners with incentives, tools, and assistance to incorporate the Vermont Conservation Design into regional and municipal plans (Act 174 is a good example of how this can work)
- Increase the authority of planners to safeguard biodiversity
 - Fix Act 250's "one acre" problem that the Vermont's Supreme Court exposed
 - Don't allow the Public Utility Commission to ignore biodiversity protections for "the public good"
- Add regional and municipal planners to H.606's group of stakeholders



EMPOWER LANDOWNERS

- Current Use
 - Add “passive management” to encourage landowners to let their forests become old growth
 - Encourage the expanded use of ESTAs (Ecologically Sensitive Treatment Areas) in forest management plans
- Owners of working lands—there are already tremendous resources available
- Conservation Landowners
 - Provide training
 - Create habitat assessment tools and programs
 - Help landowners access state, federal, and private habitat improvement grants
 - Provide technical support for landowners to form conservation associations



Photo: Moose Family in Fall by Roger Irwin